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ABSTRACT

Responding to the needs for professional bilingual linguists to work in private industry and government, the National Hispanic University (NHU) has developed a B.A. degree program in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in Spanish and English translation. The program combines theoretical and applied course work in translation in the fields of business, science, education, law, international relations, medicine, and others. This paper describes the development of the translation studies program for bilingual students at the NHU. Specific sections address the following: the need for a translation degree program; the planning of the program; curriculum development; and the translation research and resource center at the university. The translation studies curriculum has served as a model for other institutions. (JL)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSLATION STUDIES PROGRAM FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

"For the few who want to be translators, it's hard to find school" (San Francisco Examiner Staff Report, 1990).

Responding to the current needs for professional bilingual linguists to work in private industry and government, the National Hispanic University has developed a B.A. degree program in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in translation (English and Spanish). The program combines theoretical and applied course work in translation in the fields of business, science, education, law, international relations, medicine, and others.

Qualified translators to assist in immigration, legal offices, schools, hospitals and international industry are in great demand in our multi-culticultural society; however, there is currently no other college/university in Western United States that offers an undergraduate degree in translation. The foundation of this program is based on the unmet educational needs of students with language skills, and will provide the bilingual translator with the appropriate professional credential, recognition and training.

The program is federally funded in recognition of the University. It is the only one of its nature across the country. The Translation Studies program at NHU is designed to broaden educational and career opportunities for bilingual students.

BACKGROUND

The National Hispanic University (NHU), an independent, non-profit, four year institution of higher education, was founded in 1981 in recognition of the high percentage of Hispanic population in the United States.[1] Since its establishment, the University has sought to develop and implement crucial educational programs for Hispanics. It aims to provide equal education for all Americans.[2]

Because of its constant effort to broaden educational opportunities, NHU has received deep recognition and financial assistance from private and public sources. In 1990, a federal grant was awarded to the University to develop a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in Translation (English and Spanish). This program will enhance new educational and career horizons to bilingual students.

THE NEED

The need for a Translation Studies degree program is seen by studying the following factors:

- Very few higher education institutions in the U.S. offer translation degree programs.[3]
- In U.S. colleges, Spanish is the most popular foreign language and has the highest enrollment.[4]
- There is a need for qualified bilingual interpreters and translators to assist teachers, social workers, lawyers and doctors in their work since there is a high rate of "limited English proficiency" population in California.

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- The free trade negotiations between the U.S. and Latin American countries has increased the need of private corporations for professional translators.
- The influx of immigrants and international trade proposals have created a need for Hispanic linguists who are employable as translators in government agencies.
- In 1990 and 1991, Spanish and English is the most popular language combination for the translators' accreditation exam. It is also the combination with the highest percentages of failures.[5]

The NHU has taken the initial steps in responding to these needs by reinforcing quality programs and courses at all levels, such as English as a Second Language, Bilingual Education, Spanish, International Business, Bilingual Medical Terminology, Bilingual Science and Translation Studies.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The first semester, after the appointment of Director of Translation Studies Program, was spent visiting model programs, joining professional associations, establishing liaisons, developing curriculum, computer searching, selecting materials, recruiting personnel and students.

In the following semester, an introductory course was offered to the communities in San Francisco regions. This course served as a pilot study in order to gather data and as a maens to determine the most effective method of creating a permanent program. The following statistics describe the students in this pilot study:

-38 students registered for the translation course at NHU.
-100% were Hispanics. They had a diversity background including American born, Mexican, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, Colombian, Peruvian and Argentinian.
-Of the areas of interests in translation, business and education were the most popular, followed by legal and computer translation.

This was an exploratory study. Further research should be conducted to consolidate findings.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Advisory and Curriculum Committees

Two committees were formed to coordinate and plan the courses of the translation major:

-An Advisory Committee
-A Curriculum Comittee

Members of the Advisory Committee were university administrators whose functions included providing assistance with education procedures, policies, administration, and identifying potential consultants and liaisons in both California and across the country. Members of the Curriculum Committee included professionals advanced degrees in Education Administration and Policy Analysis, Applied Linguistics, International Studies, Translation and Interpretion, English and Spanish, as well as independent professionals, certified court interpreters and translators.

During the first meeting, the Curriculum Committee created a format for all courses in translation. Sub-committees were also formed and a timeline was set up for completion of projects. Three meetings were held to discuss methods and materials to be implemented for the program. An academic plan and schedule were also coordinated for the next three years. Some members of the committee become adjunct faculty for the program.

In addition, while designing the curriculum, the Program Director contacted professional consultants and sought for information and input from other existing translation schools[6] in the U.S. and abroad.

Approval Procedures:

Once the Curriculum Committee reviewed and approved the curricular proposal, the Translation Studies Program underwent the following order of approvals:

a. The Academic Senate
b. The Director of Academic Affairs
c. The Vice-President/Provost
d. The Governance Council of the University Board
e. The University Board of Trustees
f. The State of California

Program Curriculum:

Language tests are given to new students in order to identify their proficiency level in English and Spanish.

The Translation Studies curriculum includes three major discipline areas:

-Language: Linguistics, Comparative Linguistics, Professional Communication Skills and Dialectology in Spanish.
-Humanities: Hispanic Culture and Cultural Differences
-Translation: Introduction to Translation, Translation Techniques (Theory and Practice); Technical Translation in the areas of law, business, medicine, education, and science; Computers and Technology in Translation; and Research Project.

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IMMERSION PROGRAM

A cooperative agreement with the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara in Mexico provides The National Hispanic University students with the opportunity to continue their studies in translation in Guadalajara, Mexico, during the summer semester. The students gain university credits while experiencing an invaluable contact with Hispanic culture and using Spanish as the language of communication.

TRANSLATION RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTER

The translation center is aimed at providing the University community and public with assistance in translation of important documents including: academic transcripts, birth/baptismal certificates, professional credentials, and health certificates.

The main components of the center are the "Computer Assisted Translation System" or CATS, which is dedicated to the support of the Translation Studies Program, and the "Computer Assisted Language Instruction System" or CALIS, a computer program the University is helping to develop for language and translation instruction. These elements enhance reference materials of a specialized and technical nature which provide the students with extensive resources to augment classroom instruction.

CONCLUSION

The National Hispanic University has responded to significant societal needs by developing a Translation Studies major. The Translation Studies Curriculum at NHU has served as a model for other institutions. The methodology used to design this program is also being used to design new academic programs at our University.

The aspects of the curriculum methodology with which have broad applicability include:

-an external advisory group of professionals in the subject area;
-a full time director responsible for establishing a new program;
-advisory group members serving as adjunct faculty for the program;
-innovative formats of syllabi and other aspects of curriculum development;
-a technical center with appropriate equipment and systems to support learning and research.

The program has awaken interests from the public, especially from bilingual Hispanics in California. It has also expanded the new educational and career horizons of bilingual students.

CITED REFERENCES

I. 22 million U.S. citizens are Hispanics. California, Texas and New York are home to two thirds of U.S. Hispanics. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the census and the World Almanac, 1991).

2. Eighty to eighty five percent of NHU students are Hispanics and have bilingual skills in English and Spanish.

3. See William Park, "Translators and Interpreters Training in the U.S.: A Survey", 1990.

4. Source: Modern Language Association, 1991.

5. ATA Committee Annual Report, 1990 & 1991.

6. (in alphabetical order:)

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
Florida International University, Miami, FL.
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.
Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, CA.
New York University, New York, NY.
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
State University of New York at Binghamton, Binghamton, N.Y.
Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, Guadalajara, México
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico
Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, Trujillo, Perú
Université Laval, Québec, Canada
University of British Columbia, B.C., Canada
University of California at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA.
University of Hawaii, Hawaii, HI.
University of Pittsburg, Pittsburg, PA.
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

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